

**Electronic Conferencing and List Services Policies for
Managers, Users, and Subscribers**

June 25, 2003

Purpose

This document sets forth the policies for appropriate use of the City of Seattle electronic conferencing services. These policies are intended to ensure the responsible and acceptable use of the electronic conferencing and list service resources provided by the City of Seattle (the City). This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, subscribers and other individuals who are provided access to these resources.

These resources are to be used only to conduct City related business or other use authorized by the City.

The safety and security of the City's network and resources must be considered paramount when using these resources. User passwords are confidential (See privacy information later in this document). It is the user's responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of their password(s). Individual users can be held accountable for use of their account by others.

All data and other electronic messages within this system are the property of the City. This includes all of the material and records created, transmitted or stored by this resource. Records stored on or transmitted via the City's electronic conferencing services would generally be subject to disclosure under the Washington Public Disclosure Act, unless non-disclosure of a particular record is either permitted or required by applicable law.

The City reserves the right to change this policy at any time.

Glossary of Terms

As of April 2003, the City has been using NTList as its listserv software and is now in the process of converting to use of WebBoard. The policies in this document are intended to be as non-platform specific as possible, though some terminology references are germane to WebBoard's structure.

Boards and conferences provide the primary structure for the services referred to here. In short, a board is the top level domain or large folder which houses conferences. Conferences may include some combination of web discussion or announcement forums, e-mail discussion or announcement lists, chat, instant messaging or other delivery system. A forum as referred to in this document may refer to the use of any of these services.

Account	An account must be set up for each WebBoard user. It includes info such as first name, last name, user id, password, and email address. A WebBoard user must have an account before they can subscribe to conferences.
Announcement List	A list that subscribers can receive messages from. Messages are sent by

	the list administrator. Synonymous with broadcast lists in functionality. In WebBoard, announcements are communicated via email only. This is good for newsletters or single topic announcements. Announcement lists may be subscribing or non-subscribing forums.
Board	WebBoard term for the top level of the hierarchy. Also referred to as a forum. Each department or organization will have one board.
Board Manager	A person within an organization or department who administers the board. Board managers can add or delete conferences and users of the board.
Broadcast List	Synonymous with announce lists in functionality. In WebBoard, a user may choose either email or web to receive a broadcast message.
Conference	A discussion thread created under a board for a specific topic. This term is synonymous with topic forum. A conference may use web posted discussion, e-mail lists, or other distribution tools (such as the less common newsgroups or chats, if allowed) as a vehicle for their conference topics. Web posted forums provide the greatest capacity to sort and follow specific topics. Conferences may be subscribing or non-subscribing forums.
Conference Manager	A conference manager has control over a specific conference on a board. Managers can add or remove users from a conference and enable/disable chat.
Discussion List	A list allowing all users to both receive and post messages. In short this is a two way conversation. Some discussion lists are moderated and messages may require approval by the list manager before they are forwarded to the entire group of subscribers. Discussion lists are most useful where back and forth discussion of a topic would be useful or where a number of subscribers may have information to share with others.
Forum	Synonymous with board. Also refers to the general service of providing discussion and announcement opportunities.
Guest	A WebBoard term for viewers who are not users. A Guest can read or search for messages, but cannot post.
Subscribing Conference	Conferences where subscription for the forum may be done automatically via a public web form or email.
Listserv	A general term describing a service that pools recipients under one email address, enabling a message sent to the list address to be transmitted to all subscribers or members of that list. Listservs can be one-way for announcements or two-way allowing response and discussion.
Member	Member is a WebBoard term synonymous with terms “subscriber” or “participant”. A member must have a user account in WebBoard before they can be a subscriber to a board or conference.
Non-subscribing Conference	Users may not auto-subscribe to these conferences. They must be added by the conference manager.
System Administrator	Person responsible for overall control of the WebBoard site, including all boards, conferences, and users. Synonymous with WebBoard Administrator.
User	Users are registered in WebBoard and are assigned to specific boards or conferences. Users can read and post messages only.
WebBoard	The specific brand of software used by the City to provide

Section A. Setting up Lists, Boards & Conferences

1) Domain authority

- a) The Department of Information Technology (hereafter referred to as DoIT) electronic conferencing and list system administrator(s) grants and establish the technical infrastructure of boards. This includes talk.seattle.gov, lists.ci.seattle.wa.us and subsequent domains and services. DoIT maintains ultimate control and rights over all boards and conferences. DoIT may delegate to specific organizations or individuals specific responsibilities for board, conference, list and other sub-services enabled by DoIT's electronic conferencing and list system administrator(s).
- b) The DoIT system administrator will provide a single board for each city department upon request.
 - i) Additional boards may be established if the department can demonstrate need.
 - ii) Once granted a board, departments may create their own conferences as needed.
- c) Department webmasters will manage all department boards. There may be others within a department who will manage a specific conference within the board.
- d) Where there is no department webmaster, DoIT will manage the department board with the department staff managing specific conferences within the board, unless DoIT and the Department agree to a department designate for board management as well.
- e) DoIT system administrator will manage all non-City boards and conferences.
- f) DoIT may initially make available to a non-City entity (government or non-governmental entity) one board and one conference. [See Section A2(c) and (d) for approval guidelines]
 - i) Additional conferences may be negotiated based upon approval of appropriate City of Seattle sponsors, need, demonstrated capacity of the organizations to appropriately manage their board and conference, relevance to city service goals, and capacity of the city to support increased services.
 - ii) Boards or conferences made available for use by non-governmental entities should be as part of an overall contractual or other arrangement with the entity to provide the City with public services (See 2(d)).

2) Who is allowed to set up boards and/or conferences and with whose permission?

- a) Boards will be established per Section A.1 as approved by DoIT.
- b) City staff may set-up conferences with the permission of their board manager (usually the department webmaster).
- c) Other governmental bodies may be granted a board by request of a department director and with the approval of a designated City of Seattle Department Director (or Department Webmaster/Board Manager) where the board to be established supports the goals and services of the City of Seattle.
- d) DoIT may enter into agreements with community based organizations to manage a board or conference as represented by their executive director, Board of Directors president or other designated leader and with the approval of a designated City of Seattle board

manager or Department Director where the board to be established supports the goals and services of the City of Seattle.

Section B. Board and Conference Management Required

All electronic conferencing and list services provided by the City are established to address specific topics.. All boards and conferences must be managed to ensure they stay on topic and follow policy guidelines. Some conferences may also be moderated to the extent that each message travels through the moderator for approval prior to distribution. This option is implemented at the discretion of the conference manager subject to the approval by the board manager and/or system administrator.

The board and/or conference manager as appropriate shall determine the scope of the forum, who is allowed to participate, and the type of forum appropriate to their business purpose.

Section C. Adding and Removing Users

1. **Privacy.** The City of Seattle respects the needs and rights of residents to control their electronic communications and the volume and type of information coming into their home, business or organization. DoIT, board and conference managers and all users must abide by the City of Seattle's privacy policies with regards to subscriber information (see <http://www.seattle.gov/pan/MailListPolicy.htm>). For operation of the list and user accountability, users may be required to provide at least a valid email address, zip code and their full names.

2. **Opt-in policy.** Generally we expect board and conference managers to subscribe only those who request subscriptions. DoIT will not add users and board and conference managers shall not add users to a conference unless:

- a. They are a current member of a list at listserv.ci.seattle.wa.us or another existing list being transitioned to the services of talk.seattle.gov;
- b. They elect to subscribe via web, email or sign-up form that describes what they are registering for;
- c. The City director of communications or director of emergency operations determines for reasons of public notice, business, health, safety or emergency services that the user should be on a particular conference.

The City director of communications or director of emergency operations may also determine if and when messages may be sent to all or a specified portion of City electronic conferencing and list services subscribers. The system administrator may also send a notice to all subscribers where it is deemed necessary for technical reasons. [See also Subscriber Terms of Use]

Subscribers shall be notified before registration is complete that the information they provide may be subject to public disclosure laws.

3. **Adding users.** Subscribers are added first to the electronic conferencing and list system (WebBoard) and then to a board and conference. Some of this may be done simultaneously. Subscribers may self-register when joining a subscribing conference or added to the system when a conference manager adds people to a given conference.

- a. Public self-subscription. If the City decides to provide for self-subscription to a particular conference, members of the public who meet the criteria for subscription and participation may subscribe themselves as members of that conference.
- b. Conference, Board Manager additions. A conference or board manager may add new users to the system and the specific conference administered by that manager where the user has agreed to or requested subscription and the subscriber meets the criteria for participation.
- c. System administrator additions. The system administrator(s) may add new users to the system, a board and specific conferences, where the user has agreed to or requested subscription and the subscriber meets the criteria for participation, and the board manager or conference manager has requested that the system administrator add said subscriber.

4. Policy for removal of subscribers. Subscribers may be removed for any of the following reasons by DoIT or its designated board and conference managers.

- a. Invalid email addresses.
- b. Lack of participation in discussion conferences.
- c. Misuse

5. Misuse. We recognize that subscribers' misuse may result from misunderstanding. Depending upon the nature and seriousness of the misuse, users may be told to stop the misuse, may be removed from a conference and/or have their system privileges revoked. This may be permanent or for a specified period of time.

- a. Misuse may take many forms, including but not limited to 1) posting off-topic messages, 2) using abusive language, 3) violating city, state, county or federal law, 4) commercial use, 5) Use of the system to support or oppose a political candidacy or ballot measure unless permitted by applicable law, 6) overuse/monopolizing public resources.
- b. In the cases above, the board manager or conference manager may send the user a notice identifying the incident(s), describing the infraction, the reason it is misuse, and any disciplinary action taken by the manager. This may include describing expectations for future use. If the user continues the misuse, or if the misuse constitutes a major violation of these rules, the conference manager with approval by the board manager or the board manager may remove the user from the list and shall provide a notice to the system administrator.
- c. DoIT reserves the right to revoke system privileges.
- d. The conference, board or system managers may remove messages from the system if messages sent for distribution are outside the scope of the conference or in violation of conference use guidelines or other criteria as defined by the conference manager.

Section D: Managing Boards & Conferences

- 1) Board managers shall have the following responsibilities in addition to those spelled out elsewhere in this document.

- a) **Establishing conferences.** The board manager may establish conferences and ensure that a conference manager is identified for each conference. The board manager shall determine, in consultation with the conference manager and system administrator, the best set-up for each conference. (This includes whether it is to be announce or discussion, web posted forum or email list or a combination).
 - b) **Distributing policy and procedural information.** The board manager should distribute to any conference managers appropriate procedure and policy notices received from the system administrator and shall ensure policy and procedural notices are also distributed to board subscribers as appropriate.
 - c) Ensuring boards and conferences are managed according to the policies contained in this document.
 - d) With the conference manager, create welcome messages for new subscribers.
 - e) Keep the system administrator informed when the management of the board is to be delegated to another person.
 - f) Ensure that appropriate notice is sent by the conference manager to subscribers of a conference when the conference is being discontinued.
 - g) Send a notice to the System administrator when a Board is being discontinued.
- 2) Conference managers shall have the following responsibilities in addition to those spelled out elsewhere in this document.
- a) Manage conference etiquette and subscribers. The conference manager is responsible for managing the appropriate use of their conference, keeping the conference on topic and implementing this policy in their conference.
 - b) Manage conference subscribers. The conference manager should work with the board manager and, where necessary, the system administrator, to determine the best set-up for each conference. The conference manager is responsible for addressing questions about conference use from subscribers, with the understanding that the system administrator is available for technical consultation and online documentation is available for users.
 - c) Distributing policy and procedural information. The conference manager should distribute to any conference subscribers the appropriate procedure and policy notices received from the board manager.
 - d) Ensuring conferences are managed according to the policies contained in this document
 - e) Create welcome messages for new subscribers.
 - f) Keep the board manager informed when the management of the conference is to be delegated to another person.
 - g) Ensure subscribers of a conference receive proper notice when a conference is being discontinued.

Discontinuance of conferences. The City may, at its discretion, discontinue a conference. Where appropriate, the board manager, conference manager or system administrator who is discontinuing a conference shall send subscribers a notice of conference discontinuance. Reasons for discontinuance may include, among others, completion of task and term, lack of sufficient use, and/or misuse. User accounts will not automatically be deleted when a conference is discontinued..

Section E: Technical Policies

- 1) **Content.** DoIT provides the electronic conferencing and list services infrastructure and is not responsible for the content transmitted via these services, with the exception of system administrator generated messages.
- 2) **Reliability.** The Department of Information Technology and the City of Seattle work hard to ensure the reliability of its electronic conferencing and list services. However errors do occur in any system and may be beyond our control. No warranties, either express or implied, are provided. We are not responsible if a message is not transmitted.
- 3) **Authentication.** We will use basic authentication unless otherwise needed. See City of Seattle Online Privacy Policy for more information [ADDENDUM 1 or <http://www.seattle.gov/pan/privacypol.htm>].
- 4) **Archive.** The Department of Information Technology reserves the right to archive messages.
- 5) **Reports and statistics.** The Department of Information Technology makes, at its discretion, create reports and statistics on use.
- 6) **Retention of messages.** Content and messages generated from talk.seattle.gov will be retained for a period of time to be determined by the DoIT System Administrator.
- 7) **Maintenance and repair.** The City may need to take the system offline from time to time for technical reasons. The system administrator or designee will make an effort to notify Board managers, but in emergency situations may not be able to.
- 8) **Message footers.** The system administrator may automatically add text to the bottom of any and all messages that provides the first point of contact (conference manager), second backup contact (board manager), and instructions on how to unsubscribe. The footer for announcement lists will be the same or similar to the following:
 - To subscribe or unsubscribe to this list:
<http://www.cityofseattle.net/<DeptName>/<ListName.htm>>
 - To contact the moderator of this email announcement service, email:
<moderator.list>@seattle.gov.
 - To contact the City of Seattle administrator for talk.seattle.gov email:
<administrator.list>@seattle.gov or phone at 206/233-5061.
 - Terms of use of this announcement service:
<http://www.seattle.gov/pan/MailListPolicy.htm>
 - City of Seattle Privacy Policy: <http://www.seattle.gov/pan/privacypol.htm>
 - Thank you for using email announcement services, provided by the City of Seattle: <http://www.seattle.gov>
- 9) **Notification on welcome messages.** The welcome message delivered to new conference subscribers shall indicate the name of the list, contact information, the procedure for unsubscribing and notice of how to obtain these Electronic Conferencing and List Services Policies. It should also include the following message or a similar one approved by the System Administrator.

The City of Seattle is committed to protecting your privacy. We encourage you to review our Privacy Statement at <http://seattle.gov/pan/privacypol.htm> However, we also remind

you that subscriber information and information exchanged on this system may be subject to disclosure under the Washington Public Disclosure Act, unless non-disclosure of particular information is either permitted or required by applicable law (<http://www.lni.wa.gov/home/disclosure.htm>).

- 10) **Reply addressing.** Messages delivered to conference subscribers shall include the email address of the conference manager.

Section F. Publication

DoIT reserves the right to publicize the list name information about how to subscribe and unsubscribe, and conference and board manager contact information for all subscribing forums.

ADDENDUM 1- City of Seattle Online Privacy Policy

The City of Seattle **Online Privacy Policy** is available at:
<http://www.cityofseattle.net/pan/privacypol.htm>